

LSCA inquiry – answers to questions – Damian O’Connor – February 23, 2026

My answers to the questions asked follow. My answers are based on the questions provided and are best recollections of events.

(1) Since your last contact with the Committee, a copy of an Excel spreadsheet with document control number A5773943 has become public in response to an order for papers. It was tabled at the Committee’s inquiry and is available at:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/22541/Tabled%20Rath%2024%20Oct.pdf>

The Premier’s Department has informed the Committee that “A check of the info/version history of the excel file Attachment A (A5773943) indicates that it was created by Damian O’Connor on 28 April 2023 and last modified by Damian O’Connor on 17 May 2023”.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/22690/Alison%20Morgan%20-%20received%2020%20November%202025.pdf> Answer to question 5 on page 2

In an email dated 17 May 2023 you sent this list to on 17 May 2023 to the Director, Office of the Secretary, NSW Treasury, the Director, Election Project Management Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet and to Jimmy Bai in the Treasurer’s Office. In that email you state:

“Attached is the spreadsheet. It has the 93 electorates by tab. If you can see who in Treasury can manoeuvre this into a single sheet for allocative purposes. It will be reasonably easy to identify the funding to councils thereafter. It’s important that each electorate have \$400k, as per Jimmy’s point.

This appears to be the case”

(a) How did you come to create this spreadsheet?

I did not create this spreadsheet.

My recollection is, that after Minister Graham was allocated the responsibility for the LSCA program in approximately April or May, I received, via email or via thumbdrive, an Excel version of election commitments. I am not sure who provided it to me. The formatting of the file was “clunky” in the sense that there was a separate tab for each of the 93 electorates. Based on the narrative provided, I believe I asked an official if there was a smart Excel person who might be able to efficiently format this into a single tab, to simplify the use of the file, to save my time. I believe my email was in furtherance of that process.

The date suggests very early days – approximately seven weeks after the election, and probably only a week or two after our office was allocated the responsibility for administering the program in government - and well before any program guidelines or finalised list were signed off.

(b) Was the Special Minister of State aware that you created this spreadsheet?

See above.

(c) Does this list, to the best of your knowledge, accurately reflect commitments made by the Labor Party prior to the March 2023 election?

I don’t know how it aligns with commitments. I was not involved in the campaign, and had nothing to do with the making of local commitments.

(d) Did you, the Minister, or anyone in the office of the Special Minister of State add any projects, or assign funding allocations to any projects, on this list before emailing it on 17 May 2023?

I don't believe so.

(e) Was the Special Minister of State aware that you were sending the list of LSCA election commitments to NSW Treasury and the Department of Premier and Cabinet to be used for the administration of the LSCA Program?

I believe my only purpose for sending the list across in this email was to get it formatted properly so I could better appreciate the nature of the task we had been allocated. It's unlikely I would have thought this was a matter I needed to update the Minister on.

(f) Noting that the projects and funding allocations listed in the tab for Sydney on this list correspond to the projects and funding amounts which you have previously told the Committee were the original projects and allocations, could you now confirm that this list was the source of your certainty about the accuracy of what you referred to as "the original allocations"?

If that's the case, then possibly. However I still recall seeing a media release or draft as well.

(g) The comparison provided by Alison Morgan and available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/22541/Tabled%20Rath%2024%20Oct.pdf> shows that, at the direction of the Premier's Office in three emails sent respectively on 14 July, 20 July and 28 July 2023, changes were made by the LSCA Program Office to projects and funding allocations in 27 of the 93 electorates.

Apart from the changes made by the Premier's Office to the original allocations and projects in the Sydney electorate were you aware at any time of the changes made to the original allocations in the other 26 electorates?

I am not aware of the source of the 26 electorates number, or of the claimed changes. The understanding I operated with was that the "source of truth" for the program administration was the list ultimately provided by the PO to the Department.

(h) Were you aware at any time that the Independent members for Orange, Wollondilly and Murray were consulted about projects to receive funding in their electorates with subsequent changes made in July 2023 at the direction of the Premier's Office to the original allocations and projects for those electorates?

If that occurred, I was not aware of it.

Did you ever discuss with the Special Minister of State any changes to the original allocations made by the Premier's Office in addition to the changes made in relation to the Sydney electorate?

I don't believe so.

(j) Noting that the briefs to the Minister recommending approval of funding under the Local Small Commitments Allocation state "The LSCA Program Office will undertake an eligibility assessment of each submission to verify that ... The submission is on the list of election commitments provided by the Premier's Office." Did you ever discuss with the Minister, prior to him approving a brief, whether "the list of election commitments provided by the Premier's Office" was a reliable list of actual election commitments or not?

See for example the brief for Tranche 4 at:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noindex/2024-11/07-LSCA-Tranche-4-recommendations-for-funding.pdf>

Unlikely. I don't believe I would have had a reason for doing so. My working assumption was that the Department was implementing as per the program criteria, and according to the PO list. However, apart from Sydney, previously discussed, I did not find a reason to hold other briefs back.

(k) The brief for Tranche 4 includes a recommendation for \$12,000 funding for Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Incorporated. The original list of LSCA election commitments you emailed on 17 May 2023 has only \$5,000 allocated to the Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Incorporated, with a commitment that "NSW Labor will deliver up to \$57,000 to local councils across the electorate towards upgrades to playgrounds and parks". In the lists sent to the LSCA Program Office on 20 July 2023 and 28 July 2023 this commitment for playgrounds and parks was dropped and funding for five projects including Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Incorporated was increased. Were you involved in making this change or are you aware of whether the Minister was involved in making this change?

If this occurred, I do not recall any involvement by me. I am not aware of any involvement by the Minister either.